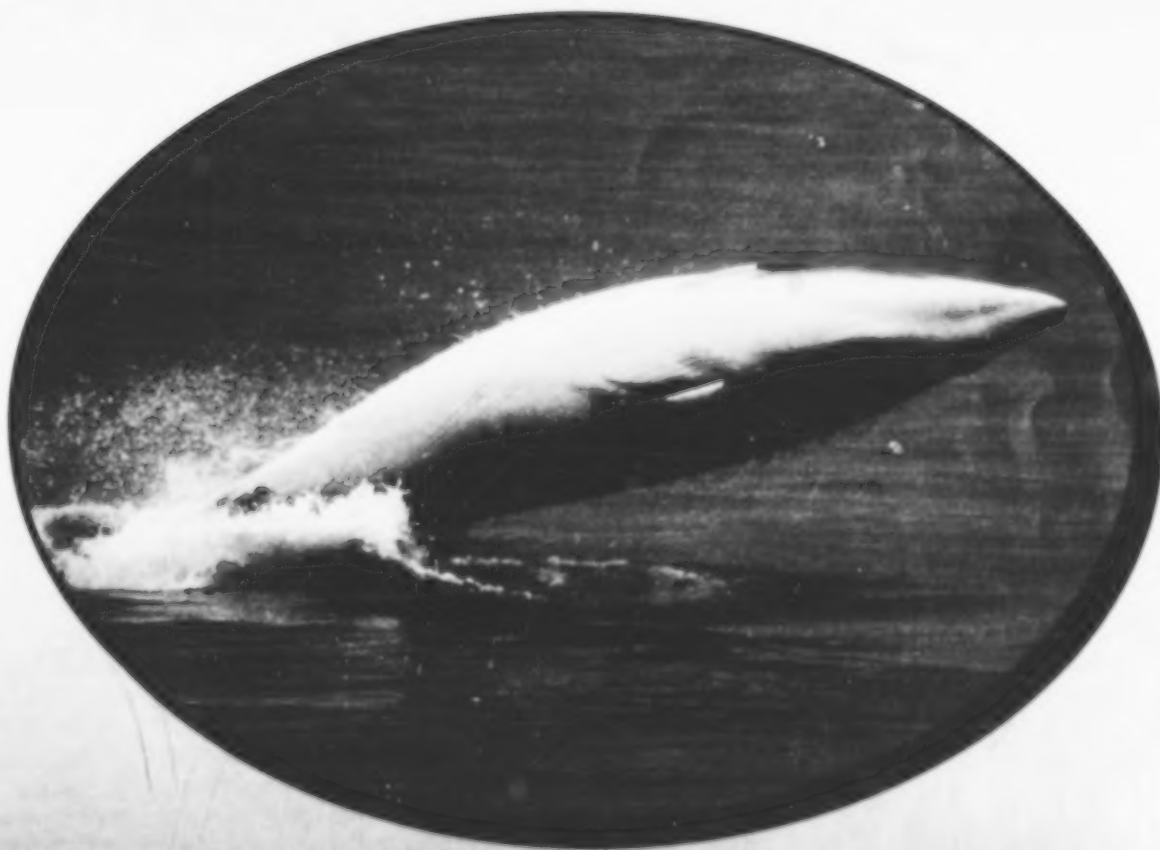


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OUR PLANET

THE MAGAZINE OF THE UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME

THE WHALING DEBATE:



**DOES SUSTAINABLE USE
INCLUDE WHALING?**



Elizabeth Dowdeswell

The environmental agenda of the 1990s is different from that of the 1970s and 1980s. It is no longer good enough simply to wave flags about environmental problems and lambast those responsible. The problems identified in the past are still, all too often, as much in demand of solutions as they were when people first noticed them. In many cases they are worse, despite the flag waving. Some of us even know of lots of solutions. What we need now is action. Unfortunately the knowledge needed to solve many of these problems is confined to the developed countries. In many cases, the countries most in need of new technologies are those least able to afford them.

The governments that form UNEP's Governing Council decided this year that capacity building was to be given higher priority. That means increasing the legal, technological and institutional capabilities of developing countries to oversee their own environments. Included in this capacity building is the transfer of the technologies developing countries will need if they are to avoid repeating the polluting, exploitive mistakes of the industrialized world.

Take urban air pollution, for example. Last year, UNEP and the World Health Organization released a report on air pollution in megacities. This showed that, while there was improvement in the once infamous air of cities such as London, the fast-growing cities of the developing world were repeating the mistakes made all too glaringly in the old industrial cities. The sources of this sulphurous mire of smoke, carbon and nitrogen oxides, and ozone are the chimneys and exhausts of industrialization. Of course, the air above cities such as Tokyo and Los Angeles is still far from pristine, but it is generally improving, or at least there are signs of progress in getting it to improve.

So how have London and New York been able to improve their soupy air while Bangkok and Beijing have polluted theirs? Access to technology is an important part of the solution. Of course, there has to be the will to clean up on the part of national and civic authorities. And there are some signs that the will is there; Mexico City's authorities recently closed down an oil refinery which, alone, had contributed vast amounts to the city's air pollution. Instilling hope by showing what can be done and by giving developing countries the capability to clean up is crucial if the mistakes of the past are to be avoided.

New environmentally sound and efficient electricity generating and transmission technologies exist. California and Denmark, for example, make increasing use of wind power which, of course, involves no pollution at all. But this is only of academic interest to the citizens of São Paulo and Calcutta. As the old axiom observes, 'if a cone falls in the forest and there is no one there to hear it land, does it make a noise?'

UNEP's task is to make a noise for people to hear, to identify environmentally sound technologies and to disseminate that information to ensure that future development leapfrogs the polluting technology of the past. UNEP's newly established Environmental Technology Assessment Programme, run by our Industry and Environment Programme Activity Centre (IE/PAC), is part of that process, alongside IE/PAC's Cleaner Production programme. It is our responsibility to establish structures that provide practical outcomes, working to solve the problems we have become so acutely aware of during the past two decades.

Elizabeth Dowdeswell
United Nations Under-Secretary General
and Executive Director, UNEP

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Contrasting views on the validity of commercial whaling as sustainable development: page 10

War in Central America has not left the environment unaffected: page 14





THE GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT FACILITY: THREE YEARS ON

The Global Environment Facility (GEF) was established in 1991 to fund environmental projects in developing countries that would not otherwise receive funding. The projects were designed to ameliorate global environmental problems, and the first three years of the GEF comprised the pilot phase. Now, with three years' experience behind it, the GEF is being restructured. Our Planet reviews the GEF as it prepares to enter a new phase.

The Global Environment Facility (GEF) is a cooperative venture among a large number of developed and developing countries, and is jointly implemented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the World Bank. It has four priority objectives:

- reduction of the greenhouse gas load in the atmosphere;
- protection of biological diversity;
- protection of international waters; and
- reduction of ozone-layer depletion.

The organization also funds projects that address land degradation, in particular deforestation and desertification,

as they relate to the four principal focal areas.

The GEF is currently being restructured, as called for by Agenda 21, the action plan agreed at the 1992 Rio Earth Summit. This restructuring also has to accommodate conventions on climate change and biological diversity.

Mikko Pyhälä, UNEP's focal point for the GEF, outlines how the organization is to be restructured.

The GEF has already opened its doors to all governments who wish to take part in the discussions regarding its future. Agenda 21 called for transparent and democratic governance, and a universally constituted body of the participants (governments participating in the GEF) will be the highest decision making authority. It is expected that the voting system, when consensus is not possible, will seek to ensure balanced and equitable representation of developing countries, while giving due weight to the funding efforts of donors (which might include some developing countries).

The governments have indicated that the three implementing agencies will remain the same; the World Bank is likely to continue as trustee, and it

appears that the secretariat will be functionally independent of the three agencies. The conventions on biodiversity and climate change require that the GEF submit to the guidance of each convention's 'Conference of the Parties' with regard to strategy, programme priorities and criteria for funding eligibility. The climate change convention even requires the GEF to submit to the 'authority' of the Conference of the Parties to that convention. The GEF participants' discussions have clearly accepted this relationship. The GEF would also enter into agreements with the Conference of the Parties on how much money each convention would receive.

What have been the main characteristics of UNEP participation?

UNEP's goal has been to ensure that GEF's operations are consistent with

international environmental conventions and agreements. UNEP has also assumed responsibility for research-related projects which provide important information for conventions, or which develop country studies for convention purposes, and has also brought its expertise to the GEF in identifying and developing high-priority projects that have subsequently been implemented by the other agencies. These include projects to protect the South-East Asian rhinoceros, to reduce and manage ship-waste in Caribbean ports, to develop action plans for environmental management in the Black Sea, and to conserve and sustainably use the Lake Malawi ecosystem.

UNEP's most visible achievement is the establishment of the Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel (STAP) which it also provides with secretariat services. STAP consists of 15 outstanding scientists from all over the globe

(see box). The STAP produced criteria on eligibility and priorities for selecting projects; these criteria helped to identify and select GEF projects in the second half of the pilot phase.

How have the three agencies worked together?

The GEF has provided a unique opportunity for the United Nations and Bretton Woods institutions to cooperate with and learn from each other. These partner agencies work together on finalizing project submissions, developing communications and outreach strategies, and developing policy papers and technical notes.

UNEP has reviewed almost all project proposals from the partner agencies. In addition to identifying a few important projects for the others to implement, UNEP has also succeeded in persuading its partners to drop or modify some projects which, in UNEP's view, did not meet GEF environmental criteria and priorities.

How is the GEF responding to criticisms voiced against it that it is not democratic and transparent?

The GEF now invites the most vocal critics, that is, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) from both the North and the South, for twice-yearly meetings of governments, agencies and NGOs, as well as to frequent meetings and workshops.

Much of the restructuring can be seen as a response to criticism from governments and NGOs. We are all doing our best to release any information requested from us. UNEP is in the process of developing guidelines for information disclosure and NGO participation in the GEF. The three agencies agree that popular participation at all stages of project identification and development, as well as execution, is central to success.

A common concern of many developing country governments and NGOs has been the distinction the GEF makes between global and national benefits. This is seen as reflecting a northern agenda rather than southern

The Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel (STAP)

This panel, established by UNEP, provides environmental guidance and supervision for the GEF. The panel comprises leading scientists from around the world covering a wide range of disciplines and backgrounds.

Dr Robert T. Watson, British-born and now a US citizen, is the Chairman of STAP. His area of expertise is atmospheric chemistry and climate. He is the Associate Director Designate for the Environment, Office of Science and Technology.

Prof. Edward S. Ayensu, from Ghana, is the Vice-Chairman of STAP. His area of expertise is tropical ecosystems, particularly medicinal plants. Prof. Ayensu is President of the Panafrican Union for Science and Technology, and a Distinguished Professor of the University of Ghana.

Prof. Davide A. Calamari, from Italy, is currently an Associate Professor at the Institute of Agricultural Entomology, University of Milan. His areas of expertise are ecotoxicology, pollution and fisheries, and hazard assessment.

Dr Benjamin Dessus, from France, is the Director of the Programme Interdisciplinaire de Recherche sur les Sciences pour l'Énergie et les Matières Premières (PIRSEM) of the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique. His areas of expertise are energy conservation, energy planning and renewable energy.

Prof. Dr Rudolf Dolzer, from Germany, is Vice Rector at the University of Mannheim. His area of expertise is international conventions on the environment, with emphasis on economic and environmental issues.

Prof. Malin Falkenmark, from Sweden, is a Professor of International Hydrology at the Natural Science Research Council since 1965. Her area of expertise is freshwater resources.

Prof. Graciela de la Garza, from Mexico, is a Professor of Graduate and Post-Graduate Studies at the Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana in Mexico. Her area of expertise is biodiversity conservation.

Prof. José Goldemberg, from Brazil, is a former Rector and now Professor at the University of São Paulo. His area of expertise is renewable energy and energy systems. He has also served as Minister of Environment.

Dr Edgardo D. Gómez, from the Philippines, is the Director of and a Professor at the Marine Science Institute, University of the Philippines. His area of expertise is marine biology and coastal ecosystems.

Prof. Dr Michio Hashimoto, from Japan, is the President of the Overseas Environmental Cooperation Centre. His area of expertise is chemical pollution and environmental health.

Prof. Dr Ivar S. A. Isaksen, from Norway, is a Professor of Meteorology at the Institute of Geophysics in the University of Oslo. His area of expertise is ozone depletion.

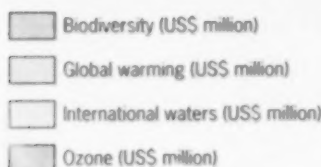
Prof. Dr Yingzhong Lu, from China, is the Director of the Institute for Techno-Economic and Energy System Analysis of Tsinghua University in China. He is also currently a Visiting Professor at Stanford University, the Institute for Energy Research and the University of California. His area of expertise is renewable energy and energy economy.

Dr Yahia Abdel Mageed, from Sudan, is a specialist in freshwater resources. He has worked on the formulation of action plans for international freshwater bodies, and on the assessment *The Environment Ten and Twenty Years after Stockholm*.

Prof. David Pearce, from the United Kingdom, is the Director of the ESRC Centre for Social and Economic Research on the Global Environment, Director of Public Sector Economics Research Sector at Leicester University, Professor of Economics at Aberdeen University and Professor of Economics, University College London. His area of expertise is environmental and resource economics.

Prof. Amulya K. N. Reddy, from India, is the President of the International Energy Initiative. His area of expertise is appropriate energy technologies and energy conservation.

GEF projects by region and category



needs. UNEP continues to seek ways to ensure that the GEF is sensitive to this by looking for areas where the two converge.

The current evaluation of the GEF pilot phase will provide guidance on how to improve the GEF's performance.

How has GEF money been spent?

During the pilot phase, 1991-93, the GEF allocated some US\$750 million for projects: 40 percent was used for biodiversity; somewhat less for global warming; some 20 percent for international waters; and very little for ozone.

The post-pilot phase, also called the operational phase or GEF II, is likely to have more than triple that amount for the years 1994-98. The conventions on biodiversity and climate change will play a major role in determining how much money will be allocated for bio-

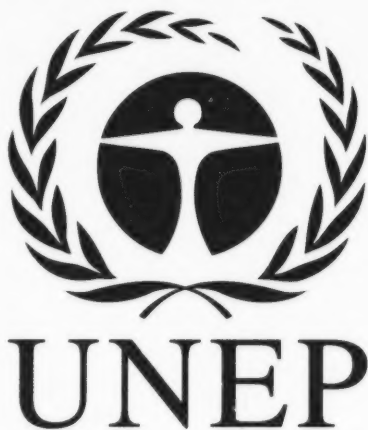
diversity and global warming. Both these conventions will require large funding—probably larger than the GEF can provide. I am afraid that the GEF may not be able to provide all the funds that will be needed to cover the incremental costs of phasing out ozone-depleting substances in Eastern Europe, where the main threat to the ozone layer seems to linger. These countries are not eligible for funding under the Montreal Protocol.

There is also a curious misconception that problems of degradation of coastal areas and international water bodies can be addressed through national funding—that is often unlikely because so many countries succeed in effectively exporting a large part of their water pollution. So, the funding needs are enormous, and it will be a very difficult political process for governments to come to an agreement on how to allocate resources from the GEF.

Have developing countries been sufficiently aware of the opportunities offered by the GEF?

I would say not. In the beginning very few developing countries participated in the GEF. The GEF's eligibility criteria are not simple, and on the developing country side the idea that the GEF would cover global benefits, but not national ones, has been felt as alien, as a discouragement. Hence, the project development process has often been more top-down than bottom-up, and this must be rectified. UNEP itself is not oriented to the execution of country projects and, understandably, governments usually approach our partner agencies first.

The role of the three GEF partners



UNEP ensures that GEF operations deal with the four priority environmental issues (see main story) in line with the the best available scientific and technological advice. In this capacity, it coordinates research and data gathering; it also organized the establishment of the Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel (STAP), and brings STAP's advice and recommendations to GEF participants. STAP also produced a roster of experts for external technical reviews of specific GEF projects.

UNEP already coordinates a number of international environmental conventions, for example, the conventions to protect the ozone layer and biological diversity. Because of these legal responsibilities, UNEP has to ensure that the global policy framework for the GEF is consistent with these conventions, and with related legal instruments and agreements. It is hoped

that the experience generated by the GEF will be helpful in developing new treaties and agreements. UNEP also has responsibility for spreading information about existing and emerging technological developments, and for helping developing countries to work out what they need in order to deal with global environmental issues at the local level.

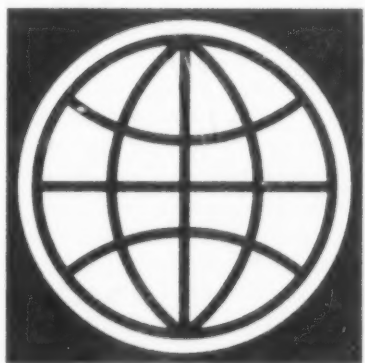
UNEP works closely with UNDP in providing the scientific and technological support needed to build environmental institutions and to train staff in developing countries.



UNDP aims to reconcile developmental and environmental concerns. It organizes research and assessment, technical assistance, institution building and training activities needed to create and implement projects.

To ensure that projects fit in with each country's human resources development strategy and action plans, UNDP coordinates pre-investment studies and technical assistance. Special attention is likely to be needed in institution building and training. In both these areas, UNDP has extensive experience, and will identify and develop programmes, working in close cooperation with UNEP and the World Bank.

UNDP will continue to offer technical assistance to develop environmental strategies and action plans. With its expertise and extensive field presence in developing countries, UNDP participates in the investment project cycle, especially in the early phases of identification of investment opportunities. The UNDP resident representative plays a key role in coordinating activities at the country level and in ensuring that the programmes being undertaken by the GEF complement other development activities.



The World Bank, as administrator of the GEF, is a trustee, which means it has fiduciary responsibility for the funds. The bank executes those projects that call for significant investment activities; this includes providing technical assistance and training. The bank is also responsible for the transfer of GEF resources to UNEP and UNDP. The World Bank nominates the Chairman of the GEF and provides the GEF Secretariat.

In those countries where the World Bank has already assisted the government in preparing national environment pro-

grammes, or where these are under preparation, the bank will seek to broaden these to encompass the areas covered by the GEF. The project cycle involves participation of all three agencies; the World Bank will organize the project identification, appraisal, and supervision process with UNEP and UNDP participation.

GEF IN ACTION: helping to save Vietnam's biodiversity

By JOHN LAIRD

Vietnam's environment is becoming as scarred as its recent history. Massive deforestation has led to soil erosion, followed by floods and drought. Vast areas of barren land have resulted from a hungry population's attempts to expand agriculture on to unsuitable and degraded forest lands. Coastal ecosystems have been destroyed simply through the pressure of human numbers. This broad pressure is further eroding the country's rich biological diversity, already damaged by years of war.

For its size, Vietnam has a remarkable diversity of animals and plants that are endemic to the country, or found only in small numbers in Vietnam and one or two of its neighbours in South-East Asia.

To protect this diversity, the Global Environment Facility (GEF) has stepped in with financial and technical support. GEF funds will help the Vietnamese government build institutions and train personnel to reverse the loss of Vietnam's forests and biodiversity. This US\$3 million project began in November 1992 and runs for five years.

UNDP administers the GEF input and has contracted two international organisations to implement the programme. The World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) already has a history of involvement in Vietnam, and has been contracted to formulate and carry out the training component in conjunction with the Ministry of Forestry. The World

Conservation Union (IUCN), also present in Hanoi, is formulating the Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) in conjunction with the Ministry of Science, Technology and Environment.

But the project is not a narrow or self-contained operation. 'Based on funds from the GEF, we can work together with international organizations to protect the environment,' said Dr Nguyen Ngoc Sinh, Chief of the National Environment Authority in the newly created Ministry of Science, Technology and Environment.

That sentiment is echoed by a senior UNDP official in Hanoi. 'This project was not intended to have a narrow focus just as a GEF project. It will create possibilities for other donors to move in. It is a good start to help a number of different actors work together and help the government move the process along.'

The project will train about 1000 staff, officials and community leaders in conservation, management of protected areas, technical aspects of conservation and community involvement.

The government had made provisions for 87 nature reserves and parks, but only one national park (Cuc Phuong) had been set up and fully staffed, and that was in 1962. The rest were sitting on paper with few or no staff in place.

Some 18 plans had been written, but some of them were already out of date. The GEF money will take these plans and put them into the real world.

According to John MacKinnon, an IUCN/WWF consultant on the GEF project, the aim is to conserve remaining natural forest lands through a system of protected areas, community and buffer zones, reforestation and sustainable use of natural living resources outside protected areas.

'The problems and solutions have been identified for years, but there has been minimal impact in the field. The action plan is to break the job down, to say who is going to do what—nationally or locally—and how to stimulate community participation. Now, everyone agrees we should replant the forest, but no one agrees who should do it,' said MacKinnon.

'New forests can restore ecological functions, provide needs for fuel and timber to the people and can create links between patches of natural forest ... Plantations will never be very biologically rich, but we have to protect those last remaining forests,' he emphasized.





Two officials of Vietnam's Forest Inventory and Planning Institute in Hanoi pose with a stuffed specimen of the Vu Quang ox, which was discovered only last year and is already thought to be endangered.

Links between patches of natural forest, MacKinnon explained, would help to save rare species, such as the Vu Quang ox, from extinction (*see box*). With fragmented pieces of natural forest, a lot of animal species would just drop out of them because they cannot have exchange. Newly planted forest links will act as corridor. Staff in MacKinnon's office have already started generating computer maps of existing forests, reforestation needs and pollution-endangered wetlands. These will

be used to illustrate to local officials what needs to be done, and what kind of land use different soil types will sustain,' says MacKinnon.

A major objective of the BAP will be to reforest barren midland areas where people tried to have agriculture but found it was not sustainable on 40–50 percent of the land. Getting this non-productive land—with its poor, dried out soil—into productivity is seen as crucial, both from an ecological and an economic point of view.

The BAP will also deal with coastal and marine problems: mangroves are threatened with extinction; estuaries need to be protected; and coral reefs are being destroyed all along the coastline.

People's participation

One of the key elements of the GEF project is to get villagers living around conservation areas to be protectors rather than exploiters of threatened resources. Involving them in the planning stages, training them for related jobs such as forest guards and helping them to set up alternative income-generating activities is seen as the answer. Income-generating activities could include such things as growing medicinal plants for sale, deer farming, and ecotourism.

Still, much depends on how the Vietnamese government steers its way through the present transition from a



Maps and overlays showing key data regarding the preservation of Vietnam's biodiversity are being composed by computer using digital scanning.

centrally planned to a free-market economy. Government officials acknowledge that they are losing their previous powers of control as private wealth grows at a terrific rate, and government structures lag further and further behind.

However, the government presently faces the daunting task of putting in place taxation policies to ensure that it can raise revenue, and the task of overhauling outdated and inadequate legislation. Just now, observers in Hanoi say there is almost nothing to stop unscrupulous developers using money to buy whatever they want—another potential threat to the environment. Already the government, as it relinquishes control of the economy and the land, is finding it increasingly difficult to persuade farmers not to cut virgin forests. The challenge for this GEF project and other projects which may follow it, is to spread the idea to officials at all levels, and the people at large, that they will all suffer if their forests and coasts are not preserved.

GEF-funded survey finds new animal

Until last year the Vu Quang ox was an animal unknown to science. It was discovered and identified as an animal unknown to the outside world during a wildlife survey by the Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF) last year. The animal lives in the Vu Quang National Park in mountainous Ha Tinh Province. Wildlife officials warn that urgent action is needed to protect this long-horned bovid from extinction through hunting and poaching. Its numbers are not known, but are thought to be very small.

According to Nguyen Huu Dung, a government programme officer dealing with the GEF project, there are already some 36 endangered animal species in Vietnam. A high percentage of those species are endemic to Vietnam, or to Vietnam and neighbouring countries. Another 10 animals are classified as vulnerable.

WHAT IS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT? THE TEST CASE OVER WHALING

A global and indefinite moratorium on commercial whaling, decided by the International Whaling Commission (IWC) in 1982, has been in effect since 1987. Although Russia and Norway have standing 'objections' (formal reservations) to that decision, they have abided by it; but in June this year, Norway resumed commercial catching of the smallest of the larger whale species, the minke whales, in the north-east Atlantic. The IWC is now reconsidering the moratorium; Iceland withdrew from the Commission last year because the moratorium was not lifted, and the IWC has been moving too slowly for Norway and Japan, the only countries now interested in resuming commercial whaling in the near future.

The moratorium was supposed to be reviewed when its effects on whale stocks had been determined. This has not yet been possible for technical reasons: it has not been in effect for long enough; estimates of the numbers of whales are very imprecise; and only in the Antarctic have surveys been repeated at intervals—and even there no changes are detectable. At the same time, the IWC is putting together a Revised Management Scheme (RMS), all the elements of which are to be adopted simultaneously. These elements include:

- mathematical rules for calculating annual catch limits—the so-called Revised Management Procedure (RMP) which has, for baleen (whalebone) whales, been finalized by the IWC's Scientific Committee and accepted in principle by the Commission;
- effective arrangements for international inspection and enforcement;
- compulsory submission of required data; and
- progress in making hunting and killing methods less inhumane.

At the Commission's annual meeting in May 1993 (Kyoto, Japan) it was also decided that an RMS should include provision for whale sanctuaries and, if possible, an independent monitoring scheme to check the correct operation of the RMP. The Commission formally 'endorsed the concept of a sanctuary in the Southern Ocean', which had been proposed by the government of France; a firm decision about this will be taken at the next annual meeting, to be held in Mexico in May–June 1994.

Sidney Holt, a 1989 UNEP Global 500 award winner, is Scientific Adviser to the International Fund for Animal Welfare, and has represented UNEP, FAO and the Seychelles at meetings of the International Whaling Commission (IWC). At the IWC's May 1993 meeting, in Kyoto, Japan, he represented the International Ocean Institute. Here, he argues that sustainable development should not include commercial whaling.

Norway's unilateral action has set it apart from most of the rest of the international community. At both the 1992 and 1993 meetings, commissioners of 17 countries signed a letter deploring this action, especially because it reduces the effectiveness of the only international organization responsible for the conservation of whales and the management of whaling, as recognized in Chapter 17 (marine living resources) of Agenda 21, the action plan for sustainable development agreed at UNCED in Rio de Janeiro in June 1992.

Most public attention has focused on the RMP, and Norway has said it will set catches in accordance with that procedure. It will not, however, be bound by any of the other cautionary elements of the RMS, and the calculations by Norwegian scientists will not be checked by an international authority. The RMP has been developed by computer simulation over 100-year periods. It requires no data other than estimates of the numbers of whales and historical catch statistics. For that reason alone, even some scientists have reservations about it. The decision not to use any biological data was forced upon the IWC scientists because there is still so little sound, indisputable information about the biology of whales, including the existence and distribution of separate populations of a species within each ocean region. Nevertheless, if the simulations are correct, the RMP is fairly conservative. The criteria used in its development were that:

- no populations should inadvertently be reduced by whaling to below 54 percent of their original number (the original number is the current population plus the

number killed by whaling activities in the past after, of course, allowing for births and deaths);

- populations should be expected to be at no less than 72 percent of their original number after 100 years of application of the RMS; and
- the cumulative catch over that period must be as large as possible within the foregoing constraints.

A major reason why the RMP has not yet been formally adopted by the IWC, despite a strong recommendation from scientists, is that the RMP would, in fact, allow resumed whaling on certain stocks that are still below 54 percent of their original number. This is despite a 1991 decision that reversed the burden of proof on this matter; that is, no stock can be caught unless there is a high probability that it is above the 'protection' level of 54 percent. Application of this precautionary rule would mean that Norway could not resume catching minke whales, protected since 1986, in the north-east Atlantic because they are depleted and their numbers cannot be shown to have recovered at all. Such reasonable caution by the large majority of states in the IWC has led to quite false allegations by Norway, Iceland and Japan that the IWC has been 'taken over' by animal rights advocates and that it is now a 'protectionist' body.

The IWC's course is entirely in accord with Chapter 17 of Agenda 21. This envisages, in virtually the same words as the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, that any resource exploitation must be held close to its level of highest sustainable productivity. If any whale population is already below that level, it will be permitted to recover to it. The IWC has also, quite properly, invoked and tried to implement the concept of precaution under uncertainty. This has placed the burden of proof of sustainability on intending whalers rather than, as previously, on those seeking to impose restraints. In this connection it is relevant that the IWC is one of the few international regulatory bodies which is required, under its statute, to take account of the interests of future (human) generations.

(continued on page 12)

Sustainable development is not yet clearly defined; getting an agreed definition will be a complex and often fractious procedure, especially when it involves use of wildlife, as shown by conflict over any resumption of commercial whaling. Our Planet presents two opposing views on whaling.

Norwegian coastal whaling is based on long-standing traditions. However, we are not equally happy about all the chapters in the history of whaling. Norway joined other countries hunting large whales in the open sea at a relatively late stage; we must take our share of the responsibility for the serious depletion of the stocks of large whales that took place in the middle of this century as a result of industrial whaling using factory ships and land-based stations in the Southern Ocean.

Norway stopped this form of whaling at the end of the 1960s, and there is no question of resuming it today. It is estimated that the stock of blue whales in the Southern Ocean has been reduced to about 700 animals. A number of other whale species, such as the bowhead and the right whale, are also threatened or severely depleted. Although catches of some threatened species are permitted in aboriginal whaling, these species are otherwise protected by the moratorium adopted by the International Whaling Commission (IWC).

Norway fully endorses the moratorium as regards threatened species, as well as other measures to protect threatened stocks of whales.

In 1982, the IWC adopted the general moratorium on whaling. This was to enter into force in 1986 with respect to the north-east Atlantic minke whale stock. In 1982, Norway entered a formal reservation against the moratorium as regards the minke whale, since we did not consider that there was a scientific basis for prohibiting catches of the species. At the time, there was a great deal of disagreement surrounding the scientific evidence.

In 1985, the stock of minke whales in the north-east Atlantic was classified as a protection stock, because the majority of IWC members believed that it had been depleted to less than 54 percent of its original level. Norway also entered a reservation against this decision. [Editor's note: a reservation is a provision with the IWC rules which allows a country to opt out of a decision agreed to by a majority of the the IWC member countries.] Certain countries and organizations believed that the north-east Atlantic minke whale stock had been reduced to fewer than 20 000 animals. The Norwegian estimate was at least 40 000 animals.

Norway resumed commercial whaling of the minke whale this year.

Johan Joergen Holst,
Norway's Foreign Minister,
presented his country's position on
whaling in a statement to the
Norwegian Parliament
on 18 May 1993.

In 1986, the government of Norway decided, despite the Norwegian reservations, to halt traditional minke whaling temporarily. The government then asked an international group of scientists to make a thorough evaluation of the size of the north-east Atlantic minke whale stock, involving scientists from other countries in the work so that no one could claim that the research had been tailored to Norwegian conditions and needs. Their results and further work in the Scientific Committee of the IWC showed that the minke whale stock is substantially larger than previously assumed. In 1992, the IWC's Scientific Committee unanimously estimated that, with a probability of 95 percent, the north-east Atlantic minke whale stock numbered between 61 000 and 117 000 animals, with a point estimate of 86 700 animals. In our opinion, the necessary conditions for lifting the moratorium on this stock of minke whales were thus fulfilled.

At the IWC's 1992 annual meeting in Glasgow, Scotland, most IWC members chose to ignore the Scientific Committee's recommendations and maintained the moratorium on minke whaling, even though it had no sound ecological basis.

Norway's primary goal at this year's annual meeting of the IWC in Kyoto, Japan, was the adoption of the Revised Management Scheme (RMS). This would have meant that the moratorium no longer applied to the north-east Atlantic minke whale stock, and that Norway would have been allocated a reasonable quota.

This is not what happened. A majority of the members opposed a decision that would have opened the way for whaling approved by the IWC. If it had been possible for the conservationist countries to discredit the

scientific evidence they would certainly have tried to do so.

It is therefore likely that we will hear less and less about the ecological arguments against whaling. Instead, we shall be confronted exclusively with politically based opposition from several larger countries. Private international pressure groups view whaling campaigns as an important source of income. The fact that it is now clear that the minke whale is an abundant species does not fit well with their plans.

After careful consideration, the government has decided to resume traditional minke whaling on the basis of the following considerations:

- Traditional minke whaling is ecologically justifiable. A limited Norwegian catch will not threaten the stock of the Norwegian minke whale. Traditional minke whaling is also important to many coastal communities.
- It is important for a coastal nation such as Norway to ensure effective multi-stock management regimes for marine resources. There is no sound basis for excepting any species in the food chain from this principle.
- Whaling issues concern the right of a nation to utilize available natural resources on a scientific and sustainable basis. For the Norwegian economy, which is, to a very large extent, based on natural resources, this is a crucial principle and one which we cannot relinquish. We find support for this principle both in the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and in the action programme Agenda 21 adopted at the UN Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro in 1992.

It is important that smaller countries in the international community are able to resist pressure from major powers which, in deference to public opinion, ignore the agreements that have been adopted for the management of natural resources. In both this and other contexts, the smaller states are dependent on compliance with agreements.

One of the aims of the World Commission on Environment and Development [Edi-

(continued on page 13)



(continued from page 10)

The whales (as well as all the other marine cetaceans, except the true porpoises) are all 'highly migratory species' as defined by the Law of the Sea. Management, conservation and the coordination of research on such species are recognized as an international responsibility (a global one in the case of the whales), which places restraints on a coastal state's rights to exploit resources in waters it claims to be under its national jurisdiction. All countries, but especially the coastal 'range' states, have a right to participate in such activities. Several of those not engaged in whaling joined the IWC in the period 1977-82 to demonstrate their interest in the conservation of a highly symbolic resource. Unfortunately, this right of participation is now being quite openly abused by the Japanese authorities, who this year 'recruited' six members for the explicit purpose of blocking efforts to designate a sanctuary in the Southern Ocean/Antarctic, and have since announced their intention to recruit six more before the 1994 meeting, using bilateral development aid programmes as inducement.

The support for Japan of some of these new arrivals to the IWC significantly changes the 'power balance' in the commission, because a binding positive decision requires a three-quarters majority of voting members, and several of the developing countries that joined after the 1972 United Nations Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm have dropped away, being unable to continue to afford the annual assessment (the IWC does not follow UN-type rules; Senegal and Egypt had to pay as much as Switzerland and France!).

The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and Chapter 17 of Agenda 21 make very special provisions for marine mammals. For them, conservation measures—both by states and by international organizations—can be 'more strict' than for fish and other non-mammals. Furthermore, these 'more strict' measures may include 'protection'. There is some legal question about whether the IWC can, under the International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling of 1946, legitimately protect permanently any whale populations, but if it did so, it would certainly not be acting against the agreements made at the 1992 Earth Summit.

Japan and the campaign to resume commercial whaling

Japan's position on enlisting the support of other nations in its campaign for the resumption of commercial whaling was spelt out during a meeting on 14 June 1993 in Tokyo between Takanori Ohashi, of the Japanese Fisheries Ministry, and the Norwegian Fisheries Minister, Jan Olsen. The meeting was open to the press and was attended by Japanese and Norwegian journalists. Ohashi told the journalists that Japan had succeeded in enlisting the votes of St Lucia and St Vincent, and Grenadines, the Solomon Islands, Grenada and the Dominican Republic. Ohashi said that, next year, Japan would be seeking the support of Thailand, Indonesia, the Philippines, Papua New Guinea, Tonga and Kiribati. According to an article by Gunnar Filseth of the Oslo daily newspaper *Aftenposten* on 15 June 1993, Ohashi also said that a number of countries had been told that, '... it could have damaging consequences for their fisheries industries if the principle of sustainable development of marine resources was not maintained with respect to whales'.

While, of course, all nations are entitled to lobby for their cause, in this case the pressure brought to bear on some of the smaller IWC nations has nothing whatever to do with the sustainable use of whales.

This year, the IWC also resolved that 'whale-watching', which is a fast-growing and profitable business worldwide, in both industrialized and developing countries, is properly regarded as a 'sustainable use' of whales. This means that people undertaking whale-watching or non-lethal scientific research in, say, Scotland can reasonably claim that resumed Norwegian whaling—especially outside international control interferes with their activities, because the same populations of whales are involved. Equally, whale-watching industries, and research groups in Australia, Brazil, New Zealand, Argentina and South Africa, are properly concerned about any resumption in

Antarctic whaling by Japan, quite apart from their basic determination that Antarctic marine living resources shall be restored.

The bottom line is that, for a wide variety and combination of reasons, worldwide resistance to any resumption of commercial whaling is growing. Even in Japan, whale watching is a fast-expanding activity. More and more people, in more countries, are seeing the marvellous new generation of wildlife films and videos which feature whales and other cetaceans, and are beginning to appreciate what wondrous creatures they are. Almost every year scientists, using 'benign' research methods, learn new things about them—about their diving abilities, long-distance navigation, songs, extraordinary learning and communication abilities, feeding habits and ways of nurturing their young.

Those wishing to squeeze the last few dollars from dead whales say whaling is a sacred tradition. But other people have forsaken that, as well as other destructive traditions, and a new 'tradition' is being put in place: the care for, and understanding of, planetary wildlife, and the protection of their habitats. Neither Japan nor Norway can stem that tide.

This article expresses the personal view of the author and does not represent the views of UNEP.

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tor's note: the Commission published the report, *Our Common Future* was to find the right balance so that the present generation can use the world's resources without depleting them and thus jeopardizing future generations. During our work, we found that it was possible to achieve international agreement, on which we were so heavily dependent when we made sustainability the basic principle. This means that we may utilize those resources that can support a harvest.

Several important factors were involved when the government deliberated the resumption of traditional whaling. The strongest argument against opening for a

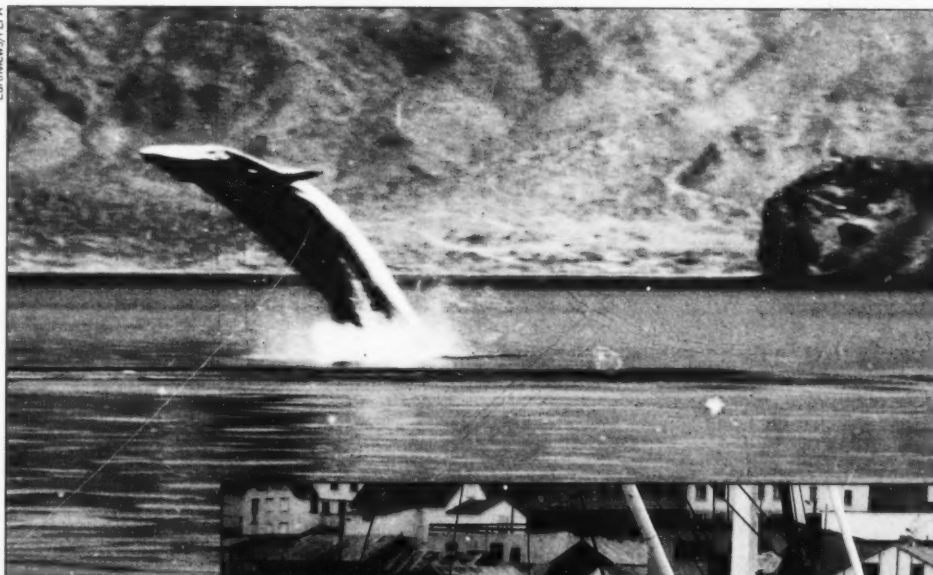
modest level of traditional whaling is the risk that Norwegian export industries, and Norwegian jobs, may suffer as a result of various boycott campaigns and possible US sanctions against Norwegian goods and services.

In Norway's view, any trade sanctions introduced would be in contravention of the rules of the General Agreement on Tariff and Trade (GATT). In such a case, we would consider all options provided by GATT rules.

If countries are permitted to force one another to accept rules prohibiting the use of resources without there being a sound basis for this, the very foundation of international cooperation and international agreement on environment and development issues will be endangered.

This article expresses the view of the Norwegian government and does not represent the views of UNEP.

Earthnews/FLPA



There is wide disparity in the calculations of the numbers of minke whales in the north-east Atlantic: estimates range from 20 000 to 40 000 whales.

In 1982, the IWC adopted a general moratorium on whaling, which entered into force in 1986 with respect to the north-east Atlantic minke



Samuel M. Frank, Arctic London Ltd



CENTRAL AMERICA: ENVIRONMENTAL BATTLEGROUND



The drawn-out conflicts of Central America have begun to subside, but there is no simple peace dividend for the region. War took its toll on flora and fauna, but saw other lands flourish, while peace has brought both relief and destruction.

DIANE JUKOFSKY reports.

Long a region marred by conflict and rebellion, Central America is now enjoying a somewhat shaky, but relatively promising, period of peace. Twelve years of civil war in El Salvador concluded with a cease-fire early in 1992, while the 1990 election of President Violeta Chamorro ended 11 years of civil war in Nicaragua. In Guatemala, a June coup saw former human-rights ombudsman Ramiro de León oust Francisco Serrano as President, raising hopes that the new govern-

ment may be able to settle a 32-year-old conflict that has claimed some 120 000 lives.

Amidst the struggles for peace in several Central American nations, conservationists are battling to save the region's wondrously diverse, but quickly vanishing, tropical forests. Central America covers only 0.5 percent of the world's land surface, yet 10 percent of all plant and animal species are found in the remaining rain forests of Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Hon-

duras, Nicaragua and Panama. Ecologists have discovered that although war can ravage the environment, it can also uncannily serve as a protector of wildlands. Peace may bring both relief, and increased pressure, to fragile tropical ecosystems.

Nicaragua: war brings respite to resources

When the Sandinistas took power in Nicaragua in 1979, ecologists were hopeful. It would have been difficult for the Sandinistas to damage the country's environment more severely than the regime of Anastasio Somoza, which recklessly exploited Nicaragua's natural resources during its 43-year rule. The Sandinistas created the Institute of Natural Resources (IRENA), expanded two existing national parks and established a third. It cancelled concessions to timber companies, and began soil and water conservation programmes. Plans were made to establish more parks, wildlife reserves and a network of forest preserves.

Some ecologists believe the government led by Daniel Ortega might have netted substantial environmental gains if the expensive civil war, fueled by sophisticated military hardware supplied by outside nations, had not intervened. Others insist these efforts were mere window-dressing to impress outsiders.

"During the Sandinista government, there was never support for conservation programmes," maintains Jaime Incer, the current director of IRENA,

and the ecologist who designed the Sandinista's proposal for a system of protected areas. "The government thought only of destroying forests to give the land to farmers. Funds given by foreign governments for conservation were spent instead on forest exploitation."

Whatever the intentions of the Sandinista government, the war waged while it was in power actually eased ecological destruction. According to Bernard Nietschmann, a geographer at the University of California at Berkeley who has been active in conservation in Nicaragua for more than 20 years, hunting of wildlife plummeted as civilians feared possession of weapons would mark them as revolutionaries, or "contras". As a result, many animal populations recovered, including white-tailed deer, monkeys, iguanas, game birds, peccaries and agoutis.

Cattle ranchers, fearing their herds would be confiscated by the government, drastically reduced them, so the amount of tropical forest cleared for cattle pasture shrank, while fast-growing forest reclaimed abandoned pastureland. The war also shut down many sawmills, as logging roads and lumber mills were destroyed. Two large tracts of luxurious forest in northern and southern Nicaragua served as strongholds for the contras, making them off-limits to colonists, poachers and loggers.

"On the Caribbean coast," notes Nietschmann, "the Sandinistas intensified their conflict with the indigenous populations that resisted the government's aspiration to make the Miskito, Sumo and Rama nations a part of Nicaragua. The indigenous nations, however, wanted autonomy and control of their natural resources."

The Sandinistas forbade the Caribbean communities to hunt and fish. They confiscated livestock and destroyed boats, shrimp-drying plants and tools. Populations of fish and shellfish rebounded along the Miskito Coast.

But a less environmentally friendly impact of the conflict was provoked by a war-starved economy. The only national park, at Masaya Volcano, was virtually abandoned, leaving it vulnerable to firewood cutting, cattle grazing



Young boys from Puerto Cabezas, Nicaragua, along the Miskito Coast, site of often violent conflict during the civil war.

and poaching. Without government assistance, thousands were forced to turn to the forests for fuelwood and food, causing massive deforestation and erosion. Looking for a source of foreign exchange, the government replaced mangrove swamps on the Pacific Coast with pesticide-dependent banana plantations.

The environmental impact of the contra war in Nicaragua spilled over the borders into Honduras and Costa Rica, where the United States built new roads, airfields and bases for extensive military training of the contras. Some

Road building and land clearing for training bases for the contra rebels of Nicaragua opened up new areas to deforestation in neighbouring Honduras.



During the civil war in Nicaragua, populations of sea turtles off the Miskito Coast rebounded, as the Sandinista government forbade local communities to hunt this traditional food source.





Chris Webb/Reporters Without Borders



The Si-A-Paz binational park extends along both sides of the Rio San Juan which divides Nicaragua and Costa Rica; Nicaraguan colonists are clearing land just outside park borders.

45 000 hectares of Honduran forest were destroyed to make room for contra bases. Construction opened up previously unreachable forests to slash-and-burn farmers.

Today, Nicaragua's economy is still in a shambles. Working with a bare-bones budget, Jaime Incer's IRENA is focusing conservation efforts on an extensive national park in the north called BOSAWAS; the Si-A-Paz binational forest that extends along the border with Costa Rica; and the newly established Miskito Coast Marine Preserve, which will be managed in conjunction with area's indigenous nations.

'We are not waiting for experts to come tell us what to do,' says Incer. 'We already know what we need to do to help protect the rain forests of Nicaragua. But we need the tools and the facilities to get the job done, and we need to work fast.'

El Salvador: war adds fuel to the fire

Civil war in El Salvador scarred an already ecologically devastated nation. The densely populated country has lost

94 percent of its original natural vegetation. According to Salvadorian environmental secretary Miguel Araújo, the resulting erosion has damaged 90 percent of the country's rivers, which are also contaminated with pesticides. Remaining soils are nearly infertile. Wildlife and fisheries have been decimated. The struggle for arable land in El Salvador is an ongoing battle.

During the war, the Salvadorian air force let loose more than 3000 tonnes of explosive bombs, napalm and white phosphorus in the countryside, scarring the earth with craters and starting fires that burned many acres of forest. Villages in northern Morazán province witnessed the destruction of nearly 5000 acres of pine forest. Wildlife sanctuaries and cloud forests were also lost.

One village hard-hit by the war is on the edge of Jocotal Lagoon in the south-west. Just before the conflict intensified, the community and wildlife biologists had worked to restore the population of black-bellied whistling ducks that once darkened the skies over the lagoon. The cinnamon-coloured ducks had long provided villagers with an important food source: eggs. But as the human population grew and the tall trees the ducks needed for nests were toppled, the birds of Jocotal declined. By the mid-1970s, only about 500 whistling ducks remained.

Villagers and biologists built wooden nest boxes and nailed them high in the remaining trees. The ducks quickly established residence, and many female ducks shared the same box, where as many as 80 eggs piled up. Since hens cannot incubate more than 30 eggs at a time, villagers could gather the excess eggs.

During the civil war, villagers still gathered eggs, even though helicopter gunships sometimes strafed the tall trees. Jocotal village was itself divided, some fighting on the side of the government, others with the rebels. According to Manuel Benítez, one of the biologists who worked on the project, it was too dangerous to visit Jocotal during much of the war, but when it became safe to travel to the region again, he found that the whistling duck project had survived—and flourished.

Cedín López, a warden of the Jocotal refuge, reports that the duck population is now a healthy 15 000 birds, which lay their eggs in some 500 nest boxes. The whistling ducks, called *pshishishis* in El Salvador, are true war survivors.

Guatemala: war rages in the Petén

A decade ago, during a particularly violent period of the protracted civil war in Guatemala, frequent ambushes by rebels along the country's highway spurred the government to burn and cut back the forest some 200 metres along roadways. 'You could travel for miles in the highlands and see clearcut forest,' remembers Marco Vinicio Cerezo, president of the Ecological Foundation. With the war subsiding, the government is building new roads through forest land to former guerrilla strongholds, in an attempt to integrate these communities with the rest of the nation.

Today, the region most affected by continuing conflict is the tropical forest of Petén, cradle of the Maya civilization. Almost 3.5 million acres of forest in the Petén, which lies in the far north of Guatemala, are supposedly protected

The village of Jocotal, El Salvador. Despite raging civil war, villagers successfully restored the indigenous population of black bellied whistling ducks.



Chris Webb/Reporters Without Borders



Deforestation in the Maya Biosphere in Guatemala is closing in on the forest and ruins at Tikal.

by the Maya Biosphere Reserve. But in many ways the reserve is just a paper park. 'It's a no-man's land in the Petén,' says Cerezo.

Illegal loggers pay for protection. Some bribes go to the guerrillas, some to the army. Poorly paid officers make extra money by smuggling endangered scarlet macaws, parrots and jaguar skins over the border into Mexico. Park buildings and checkpoints are customarily burned to the ground. Earlier this year, illegal loggers viciously beat a journalist and park guards investigating deforestation in the reserve. 'The army was paid off, so they just stood by,' says Cerezo. 'The war created this situation, so now illegal predators of natural resources are running around with M-16s in the forest. No one knows what side they are on.'

Refuge in the forest

The peril and instability of conflict in Central America results in the most ecologically damaging problem: refugees. In the Petén, for example, some 250 settlers arrive daily to carve out a piece of the jungle. They are not just from conflicted areas of Guatemala, but also from El Salvador and Nicaragua. Guatemalans are also moving into the forests of neighbouring Belize.

'Refugees are the most serious threat to our future,' believes Cerezo. 'People flee the war where they live to the mountains and forest,' cutting and burning trees to try to grow subsistence crops. The cruel fate of many refugees throughout Central America is framed by this fact of nature: most tropical-forest soils will not support anything other than the rich biodiversity of the rain forest, and crops soon fail, forcing people to move ever further into the forest. It is a hopeless, bitter cycle.

'What scares the hell out of me now,' says Cerezo, 'is that we have about 60 000 refugees in Mexico. It has become a political banner to say we're going to bring back these refugees, but where will they go? There is an enormous temptation to put them in the last forested regions in the country, the only pieces of unclaimed land. I think the United Nations should see to it that the repatriation process is made with full regard to the environment.'

The first group of refugees to return from Mexico in early 1993 were, indeed, given land in luxurious rain forest in northern Guatemala, where they have cleared acres of land, and are struggling to survive.

War refugees in search of free land are also crowding ever closer to the borders of Sí-A-Paz ('yes-to-peace' in Spanish) bi-national park in Nicaragua, former contra territory. In El Salvador, the government resettled refugees in the coastal area of Barro de Santiago, where they joined area fishermen in plundering the population of fish and shrimp.

Parks for peace

While peace continues precariously in Central America, one promising development is the recent emergence of parks whose borders and management responsibilities are shared by two or more countries. Costa Rica and Panama jointly manage a 2.5 million acre biosphere reserve spanning their borders, called 'La Amistad,' the Spanish word for friendship. Costa Rica and Nicaragua share the Sí-A-Paz park that stretches along their borders. El Trifinio is a 3.2 million-acre mountainous area

that spans the borders of Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras.

'Nothing seems to soothe regional tensions better than creating international reserves,' says Manuel Ramírez, a programme director for Conservation International, a US environmental group. 'Central American leaders recognize the importance of their dangerously dwindling, shared natural resources.'

Linking international parks is a cornerstone of a conservation plan developed by the US-based Caribbean Conservation Corporation and Wildlife Conservation Society. Supported by the United States Agency for International Development's Central American conservation programme, the project is called 'Paseo Pantera,' or 'path of the panther.' Project advisor Jim Barborak notes that Central America 'probably has more forested land on shared borders than anywhere else in the world.'

'Peace parks' may set the pace as Central American nations struggle for armistice, with their own citizens and with their environments.



PUBLICATIONS

WHOSE COMMON FUTURE? Reclaiming the Commons

The Ecologist, Earthscan Publications Ltd, London, 1993

Whose Common Future? hurls the title of the Brundtland Report, *Our Common Future*, back at its authors. The 197 pages that follow the question in the title give a negative answer: today's environmental agenda will benefit neither the planet nor ordinary people.

With the completion of the Brundtland Report and the 1992 Earth Summit's Agenda 21, there seemed at last to be some consensus—albeit a still coalescing one—on the future environmental agenda: sustainable development. This book passionately decries the ideas around which the consensus is forming.

The quirky magazine *The Ecologist* has, for more than 20 years, been among the most intellectually adventurous of environmental publications. It has feared neither ridicule for the apparent radicalism of the ideas it presents nor the disapprobation of the establishment for the status of its targets—a recent editorial called at some length for the resignation of World Bank President Lewis Preston. With such a pioneering pedigree, ideas from *The Ecologist* stable have long demanded consideration.

This work, characteristically radical, thumbs its nose at convention, and is a worrying commentary on the emerging mainstream agenda for development and the environment. It would be even more worrying if the idea its authors have latched onto were not applied to every environmental problem most people ever thought of, and a good few more. But, flawed or not, the book makes a strong case at the expense of what, increasingly, is conventional wisdom.

The book is a collaborative effort between the editorial team of *The Ecologist*: Simon Fairlie, Nicholas Hildyard, Larry Lohman and Sarah Sexton—an appropriate gestation given the community, or 'commons', focused world they call for. They do not, however, claim exclusive responsibility for the text, saying that many others, from both the North and the South, also made contributions.

The idea at the core of the book is a rebuttal of the 'tragedy of the commons' paradigm, which justifies the division of common land in the early stages of the

Industrial Revolution in England. This paradigm holds that the common lands were being overgrazed and destroyed by sheep farmers, and that because no one owned them, everyone tried to maximize their returns from these commons; thus, by dividing up the commons and privatizing them—'enclosing' them is the word the authors use throughout the book—each person then had an incentive to look after the land.

But the historians have got it all wrong, it seems. In the authors' view, the real tragedy was the dispossession of rural farmers and the creation of an exploitable urban workforce. The land they had come from and cherished was ploughed up, the trees and forests cleared, and wildlife decimated—all in the interests of industrialists. This served the interests of neither the dispossessed, nor the land on which they had formerly lived and depended.

This process, they argue, was aimed at maximising short-term production and then moving on. After the exploitation of the commons came India. Much of the wool that had been grown on the 'enclosed' land was replaced by cotton from the burgeoning British Empire and, soon, Indian villagers and their land became the new exploited ones—the cotton they had used themselves taken, instead, to the mills of Lancashire, then back to India for sale. This expropriation was not a purely English, or even industrial, phenomenon; it was '... as determinedly pursued by the courts of Aztec Mexico, the feudal lords of West Africa, by the factory owners of Lancashire and the British Raj, as it is today by the International Monetary Fund or the Coca Cola Corporation.'

The evil is one of enclosure—separating local communities from control over their land and resources, whether by depriving them of the use of their land and their traditional knowledge about its use, or of access to markets for its produce. The book argues that increasing numbers of farmers—for example, contract growers in North America—have little choice of what to sell or even what to grow, although they still hold the titles to their land. They are forced to use proprietary seed varieties with specially

designed herbicides, and to sell to only one company. The goal of maximising production has spawned monocultures and overdependence on destructive chemicals. In many places, communities have been forced into the cash economy. The consequences, argue the authors, are species extinction, deforestation and soil degradation.

By contrast, they point to communities where a 'commons' regime still exists, where the pressure to join the cash economy has been resisted. India's Chipko movement is cited as just such a community. These tree huggers, mainly women, have succeeded in protecting much of their forests from the loggers who came to clear them. Commons regimes, it seems, are neither historical relics nor the last resort of the destitute; they include present-day Swiss farmers and lobster harvesters off the coast of Maine, as well as the indigenous peoples of Amazonia and Malaysia.

The success of a commons regime stems from the incentive and experience that people who live in a community have to look after their environment. Experts from outside are decried throughout the book.

As for the resources and technology transfer called for by the developing world, this is simply a plea in the interests of developing world elites. The technology binds these countries into exactly the same exploitative management regimes that have already damaged the land and communities of Europe and North America.

The authors, however, are so convinced of the merit of their concept that, like a child with a new toy that must go everywhere, they use it to explain everything, from population issues to the failings of environmental accounting. Their analysis of the original tragedy of the commons paradigm is also historically contestable.

The tone of the book also detracts from the merit of its case. For example, the authors cannot resist sneering interjections in the middle of quotes from the corporate

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TOURIST INDUSTRY WANTS ENVIRONMENTAL CODE



Gerald Cubitt, Bruce Coleman Ltd

A UNEP survey of international travel and tourism has found intense interest in environmental codes of conduct. The survey was carried out earlier this year by UNEP's Paris-based Industry and

Environment Programme and Activity Centre (IE/PAC), with the help of the International Institute for Peace through Tourism from Canada.

The first results of the survey clearly show that, while existing codes are not well known, many countries and organizations are currently preparing codes of conduct for tourist operators. UNEP's Paris office has already joined with the International Hotels Association and the Prince of Wales Business Leaders Forum on a programme aimed at getting information on environmental management to medium and small hotels, particularly in developing countries.

UNEP is also working with UNESCO and the World Tourism Organization on a programme for

guidelines on tourism in World Heritage sites. These are locations that range from vast natural parks to small pristine sites of great natural beauty.

For more information write to:

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A BIT OF HISTORY, PLEASE



Scientists and those with an interest in the coastlines of East Africa, please step forward. UNEP would like any old research and photographs as we begin compiling an atlas of marine resources for the coastlines of Comoros, Kenya, Madagascar,

Mauritius, Mozambique, Réunion, Seychelles, Somalia and Tanzania.

The project will build up a data base for the marine resources of the coasts and oceans of East Africa, as well as leading to the publication of a marine atlas for the region.

The project is being coordinated by UNEP's Oceans and Coastal Areas Programme Activity Centre (OCA/PAC) in Nairobi. Coordinator Dirk Van Spreybroeck says that a lot of research has been done by scientists from outside the region who have taken their findings with them; now the region needs it back. But it is not just scientific data from the past 30 years or so that is needed, but photographs as well. Old photographs that might indicate how the marine resources of the region have

changed or have been changed will also help in the project.

If you think you might have some old research or some photographs, or have a friend or colleague who has, please contact:

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Fax (254 2) 230 127.

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targets of their criticism. A reader is left with the feeling that the authors, having made an exciting discovery and believing that it is right, have closed their minds to both convention and competing alternative wisdom. Despite the genuflections to medi-

ern commons cultures, the writers seem to be harking back to a bygone age. There is the suspicion that perhaps the book is nothing more than an extravagant plea to turn back the clock, when time has no reverse gear.

However, one is also left with the uneasy feeling that there is a germ of truth in their

argument, and that it has little place in tomorrow's environmental agenda—a timely, ironic point in this, the United Nation's Year of Indigenous People.

